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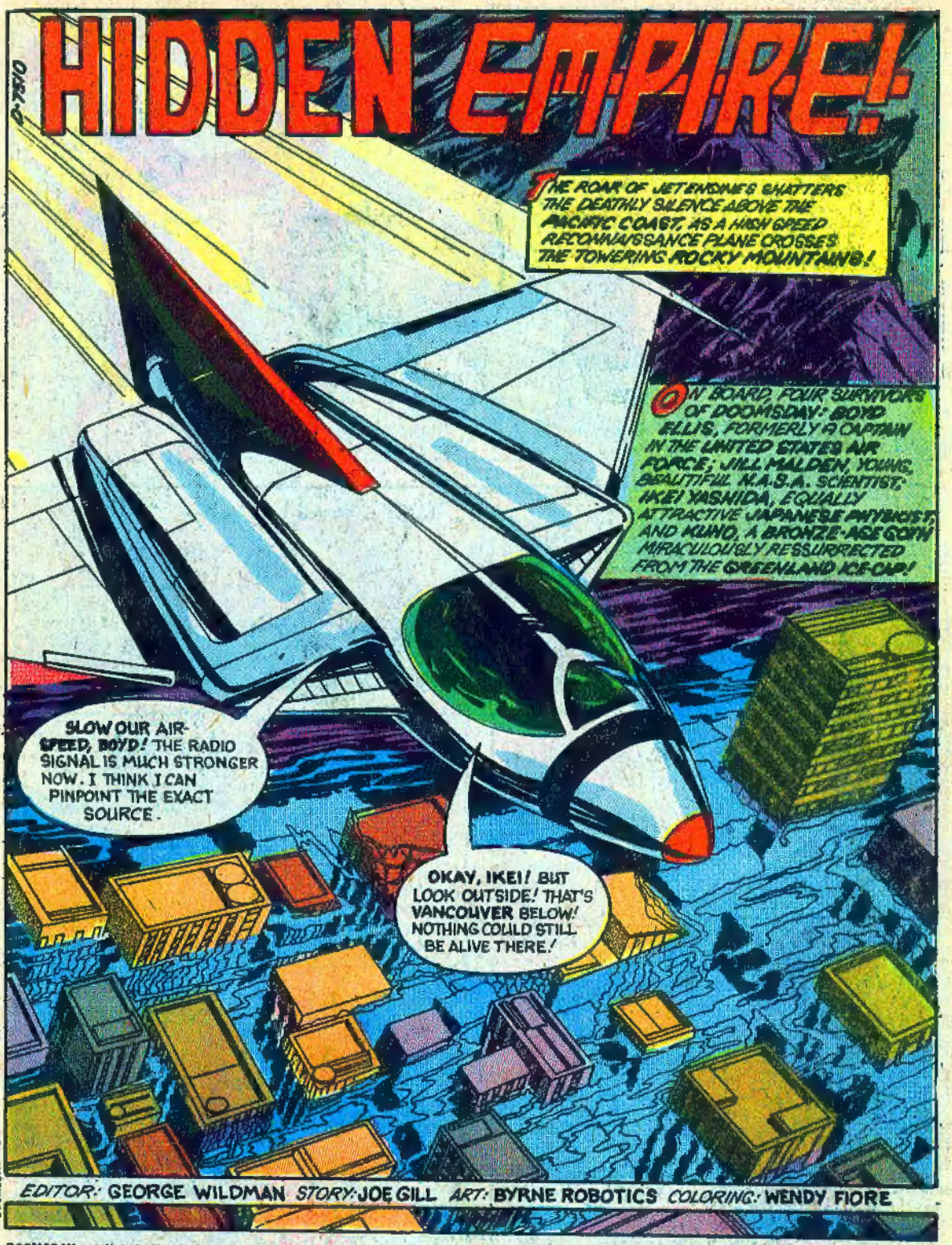
HIDDEN EMPIRE!
THE ROAR OF JET ENGINES SHATTERS THE DEATHLY SILENCE ABOVE THE PACIFIC COAST, AS A HIGH SPEED RECONNAISSANCE PLANE CROSSES THE TOWERING ROCKY MOUNTAINS!
ON BOARD, FOUR SURVIVORS OF DOOMSDAY: BOYD ELLIS, FORMERLY A CAPTAIN IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE; JILL MALDEN, YOUNG, BEAUTIFUL N.A.S.A. SCIENTIST; IKE! YASHIDA, EQUALLY ATTRACTIVE JAPANESE PHYSICIST; AND KUNO, A BRONZE-AGE GOTH MIRACULOUSLY RESSURRECTED FROM THE GREENLAND ICE-CAP!
SLOW OUR AIR-SPEED, BOYD! THE RADIO SIGNAL IS MUCH STRONGER NOW. I THINK I CAN PINPOINT THE EXACT SOURCE.
OKAY, IKE! BUT LOOK OUTSIDE! THAT'S VANCOUVER BELOW! NOTHING COULD STILL BE ALIVE THERE!
EDITOR: GEORGE WILDMAN STORY: JOE GILL ART: BYRNE ROBOTICS COLORING: WENDY FIORE
DOOMSDAY + 1

DOOMSDAY + 1 Vol. 2, No. 4, January, 1976.
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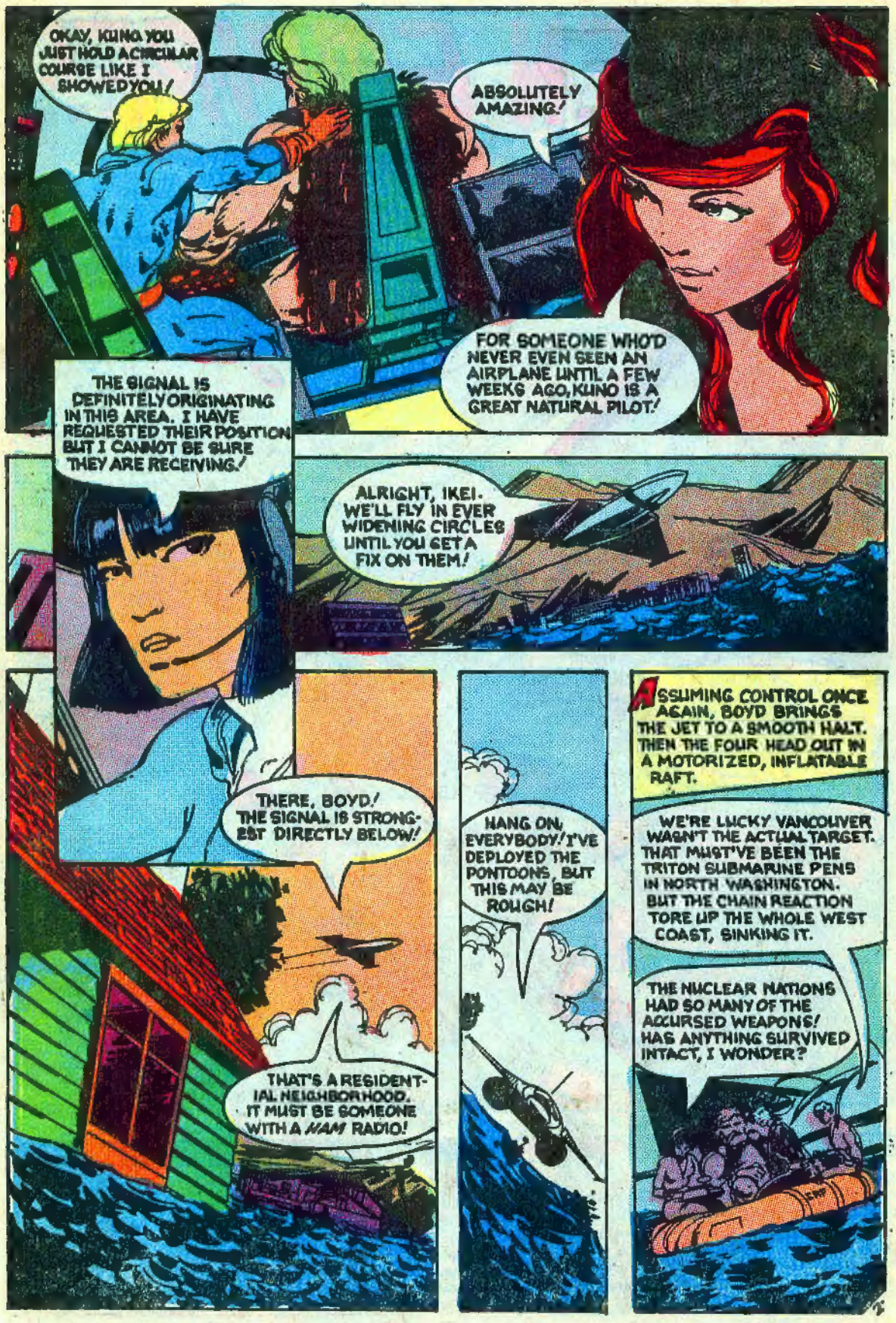
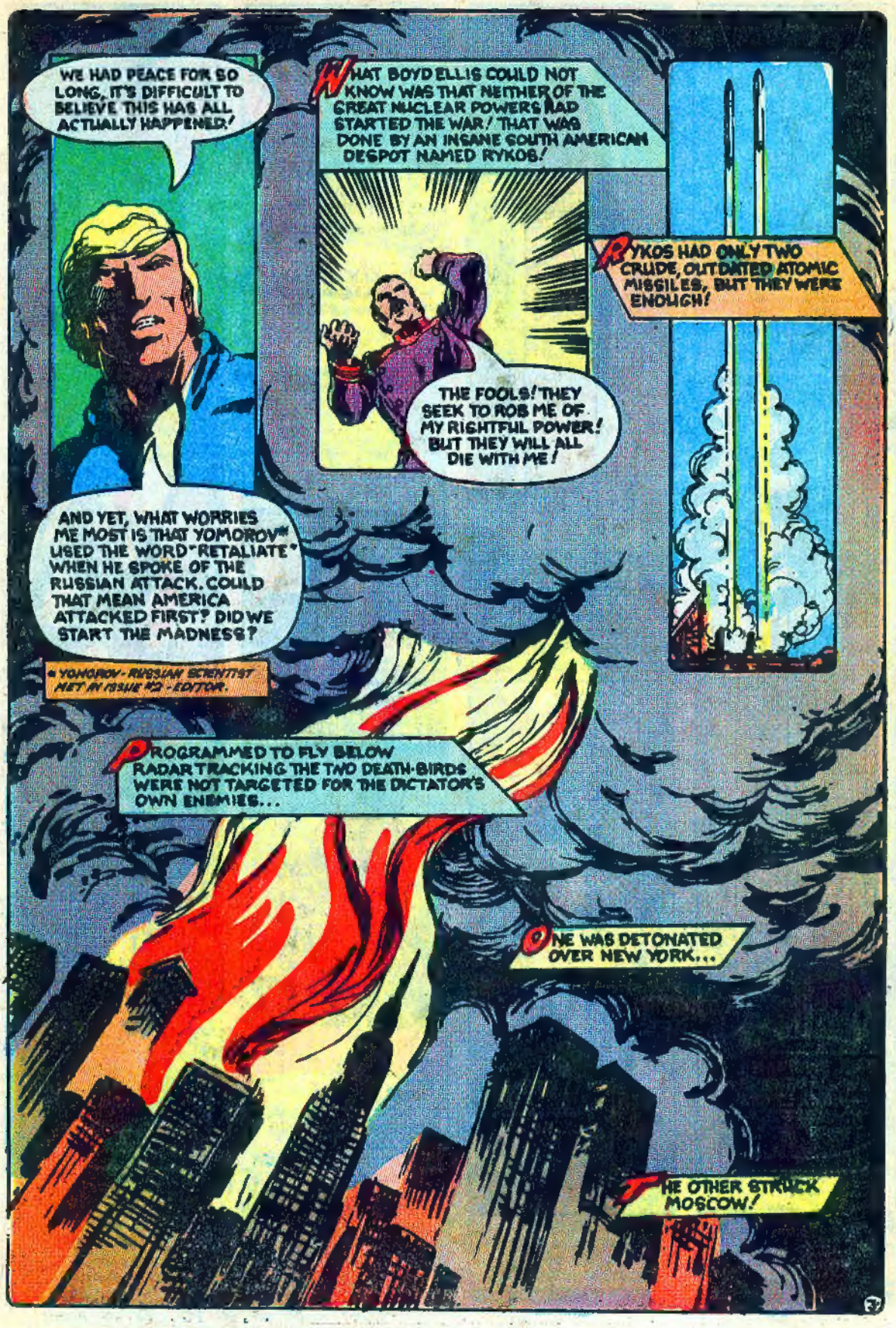

OKAY, KUNO, YOU JUST HOLD A CIRCULAR COURSE LIKE I SHOWED YOU!
ABSOLUTELY AMAZING!
FOR SOMEONE WHO'D NEVER EVEN SEEN AN AIRPLANE UNTIL A FEW WEEKS AGO, KUNO IS A GREAT NATURAL PILOT!
THE SIGNAL IS DEFINITELY ORIGINATING IN THIS AREA. I HAVE REQUESTED THEIR POSITION BUT I CANNOT BE SURE THEY ARE RECEIVING!
ALRIGHT, IKEI. WE'LL FLY IN EVER WIDENING CIRCLES UNTIL YOU GET A FIX ON THEM!
THERE, BOYD! THE SIGNAL IS STRONGEST DIRECTLY BELOW!
THAT'S A RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD. IT MUST BE SOMEONE WITH A HAM RADIO!
HANG ON, EVERYBODY! I'VE DEPLOYED THE PONTOONS, BUT THIS MAY BE ROUGH!
ASSUMING CONTROL ONCE AGAIN, BOYD BRINGS THE JET TO A SMOOTH HALT. THEN THE FOUR HEAD OUT IN A MOTORIZED, INFLATABLE RAFT.
WE'RE LUCKY VANCOUVER WASN'T THE ACTUAL TARGET. THAT MUST'VE BEEN THE TRITON SUBMARINE PENS IN NORTH WASHINGTON. BUT THE CHAIN REACTION TORE UP THE WHOLE WEST COAST, SINKING IT.
THE NUCLEAR NATIONS HAD SO MANY OF THE ACCURSED WEAPONS! HAS ANYTHING SURVIVED INTACT, I WONDER?


WE HAD PEACE FOR SO LONG, IT'S DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THIS HAS ALL ACTUALLY HAPPENED!
WHAT BOYD ELLIS COULD NOT KNOW WAS THAT NEITHER OF THE GREAT NUCLEAR POWERS HAD STARTED THE WAR! THAT WAS DONE BY AN INSANE SOUTH AMERICAN DESPOT NAMED RYKOS!
THE FOOLS! THEY SEEK TO ROB ME OF MY RIGHTFUL POWER! BUT THEY WILL ALL DIE WITH ME!
RYKOS HAD ONLY TWO CRUDE, OUTDATED ATOMIC MISSILES, BUT THEY WERE ENOUGH!
AND YET, WHAT WORRIES ME MOST IS THAT YOMOROV* USED THE WORD "RETALIATE" WHEN HE SPOKE OF THE RUSSIAN ATTACK. COULD THAT MEAN AMERICA ATTACKED FIRST? DID WE START THE MADNESS?
* YOMOROV - RUSSIAN SCIENTIST MET IN ISSUE #2 - EDITOR.
PROGRAMMED TO FLY BELOW RADAR TRACKING THE TWO DEATH-BIRDS WERE NOT TARGETED FOR THE DICTATOR'S OWN ENEMIES...
ONE WAS DETONATED OVER NEW YORK...
THE OTHER STRUCK MOSCOW!

THE AMERICAN NUCLEAR DEFENSE SYSTEM WAS THE FASTEST IN THE WORLD. RETALIATION BEGAN WITHIN SECONDS...
BUT IF THE RUSSIANS LACKED SPEED, THEY MADE UP FOR IT IN MIGHT. THEIR OWN "RETALIATION" WAS SWIFT AND TERRIBLE!
A LONE ESKIMO FISHERMAN BECAME FIRST VICTIM OF THE COUNTER-ATTACK!
TO AVOID THE DANGER OF HUMAN ERROR, THE NUCLEAR INITIATIVE OF BOTH NATIONS HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO COMPLEX COMPUTER SYSTEMS.
BUT THIS MEANT THE DEADLY STORM COULDN'T BE STOPPED!
PRESIDENT COLE! HAVE YOU GONE MAD? YOUR INSANE ATTACK ON MOSCOW HAS UNLEASHED...
WE DID NOT ATTACK YOU, COMRADE BEKINOV. I FEAR WE HAVE ALL BEEN THE VICTIMS OF OUR OWN FOLLY!
SOMEONE HAS TRIGGERED THIS WAR FOR HIS OWN REASONS, AND WE WILL ALL PAY WITH OUR LIVES!
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, MIKHAIL- I AM SORRY...

CONTINUED AFTER FOLLOWING PAGE

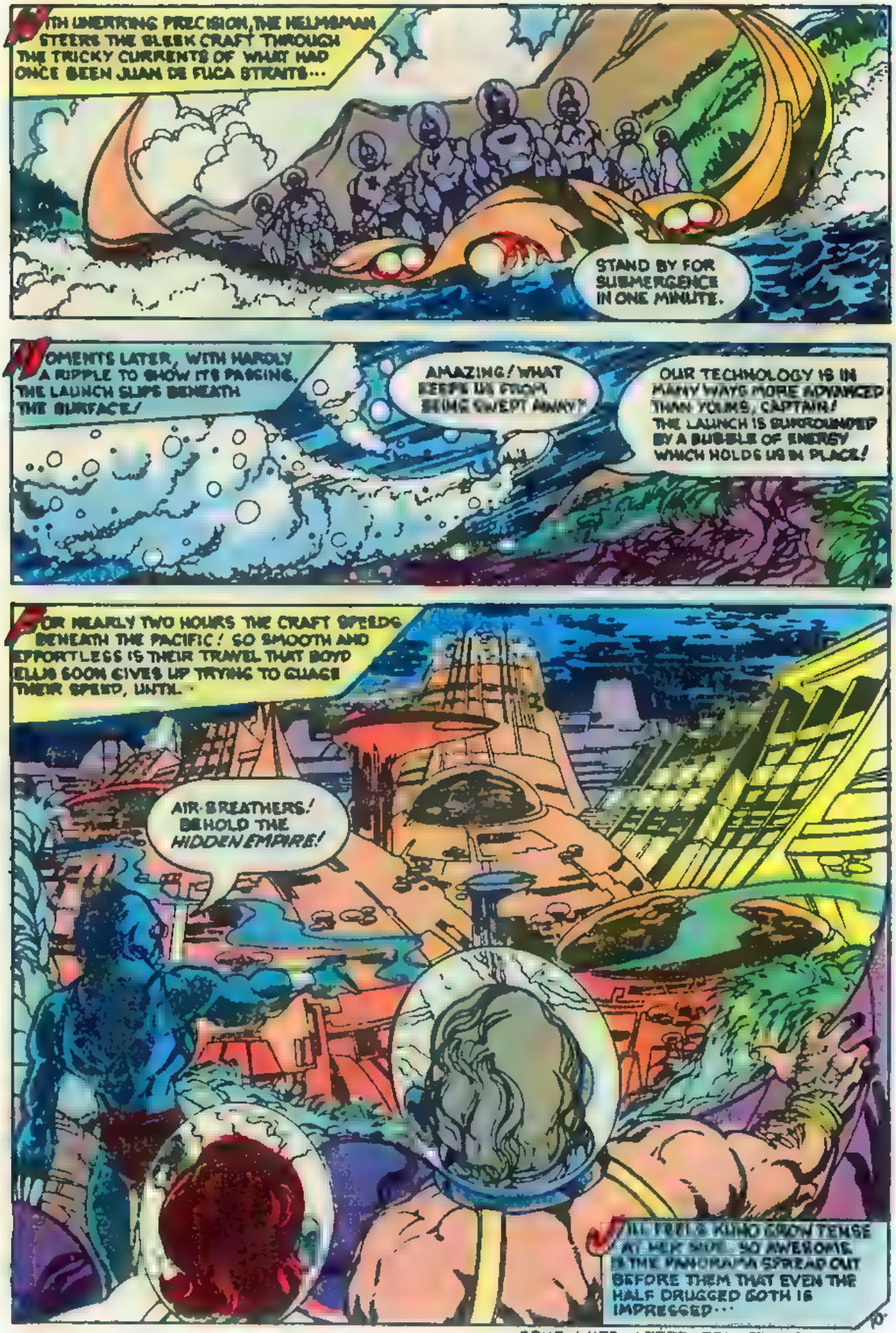
WHOLE WORLD DESTROYED BY STUPID MEN? KUNO CAN-NOT BELIEVE THAT, BO-YUD!
IN KUNO'S TIME, SUCH POWER BELONGED ONLY TO THE GODS!
PERHAPS, WE'D HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF IF IT HAD STAYED THAT WAY, KUNO!
BOYD! THE SIGNAL IS COMING FROM THAT HOUSE!
CAUTIOUSLY, BOYD ELLIS BRINGS THE RAFT UP TO AN OPEN WINDOW...
ALL CLEAR! LET'S HAVE A LOOK AROUND!
A QUICK SEARCH OF THE FLOODED LOWER FLOOR REVEALS NOTHING, SO...
THE RADIO MUST BE UP-STAIRS. COME ON, PEOPLE!
IT'S IN HERE! YOU CAN HEAR THE MORSE THROUGH THE DOOR! I'LL JUST...
OH, MY GOD!
E-MAN LIVES!
GOOD AFTERNOON, CAPTAIN ELLIS. DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED! IT IS FAR TOO LATE FOR THAT!

I'M NOT. WHAT... WHO ARE YOU? HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?
YOU MAY CALL ME YIZ, CAPTAIN. THAT IS THE CLOSEST PRONUNCIATION YOUR AIR-BREATHER VOCAL CHORDS COULD MANAGE. AND I ASSURE YOU, I KNOW A GREAT DEAL ABOUT YOURSELF, AND YOUR TWO COMPANIONS!
I AM A CITIZEN OF WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL THE HIDDEN EMPIRE! FOR MANY CENTURIES WE HAVE WATCHED AS YOUR SPECIES MISMANAGED THIS PLANET WE SHARE!
AND AS WE WATCHED, WE STUDIED, EXAMINING YOUR BOOKS, YOUR WORKS OF ART AND TECHNOLOGY. WE EVEN LEARNED YOUR MANY LANGUAGES.
BUT WE CHOSE NOT TO REVEAL OURSELVES TO OUR AIR-BREATHING COUSINS! FROM YOUR TREATMENT OF MEMBERS OF YOUR OWN SPECIES WE GUESSED YOU WOULD NOT TAKE KINDLY TO OURS.
THERE IS A COLONY OF YOUR PEOPLE IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, I THINK. PEARL DIVERS REPORTED SEEING MAN-LIKE CREATURES AT LOWER DEPTHS.
MY COUNTRY FINANCED A SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION. TWO OF MY FELLOW SCIENTISTS WENT DOWN IN A BATHYSPHERE. THERE WAS A GARBLED REPORT OF AN UNDERSEA COMPLEX- THEN CONTACT WAS LOST! THE MEN VANISHED WITHOUT TRACE!
BLAME YOUR OWN HOSTILE NATURES, AIR-BREATHER! WE DEEMED IT IMPRACTICAL TO ALLOW YOU TO LEARN MORE ABOUT US...
I THINK WE JUST LEARNED ALL WE NEED TO KNOW— GIRLS, GET BACK TO THE RAFT!

YOUR TOYS DO NO FRIGHTEN ME, CAPTAIN! AS YOU SEE MY REFLEXES ARE MUCH FASTER THAN YOURS!
NO! FISH-FACE HURT BO-YUD!
KUNO SMASH!
WHAT IN...?!
A PRIMITIVE! THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE REPORTS ABOUT...
KUNO KILL!
IGNORANT SAVAGE!
CHUNK
MY BODY HAS EVOLVED TO WITHSTAND THE PRESSURES OF THE DEPTHS! YOUR PUNY WEAPON CANNOT HARM ME!
THEN KUNO WILL FIND SOMETHING THAT CAN!
NO! YOU FOOL! YOU STUPID FOOL! YOU HAVE SMASHED MY LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM! I WILL DROWN!
HOLD!
THUNG!
DO NOT MOVE - ANY OF YOU!

SURELY YOU AIR-BREATHERS ARE NOT SO FOOLISH AS TO THINK YIZ WAS ALONE? DO NOT ATTEMPT ANY ACTION AGAINST US, OR···
···OR WHAT? YOU DON'T DARE KILL US. YOU CAN'T BE SURE WE'RE THE ONLY HUMANS. WE MIGHT HAVE SUPERIORS WHO WOULD SEND A SEARCH PARTY AFTER US!··
INTERESTING, BUT MOST UNLIKELY, CAPTAIN ELLIS. IN THE WEEKS THAT YIZ HAS OPERATED THE RADIO DEVICE YOU ARE THE ONLY HUMANS WHO HAVE RESPONDED.
···BUT FIRST···
SUBDUE THE BARBARIAN!
KEES, TEND TO YIZ, THEN FETCH LUNGS FOR THE AIR-BREATHERS···

DON'T BE AFRAID, KUNO! IT'S ONLY A TRANQUILIZER- A DRUG TO MAKE YOU SLEEPY!
KUNO WILL BE ALRIGHT, JIH! DO NOT WORRY! KUNO WILL STAY AWAKE AND PROTECT HIS FRIENDS!
THE SAVAGE HAS REMARKABLE RESISTANCE! THAT DART HOLDS SUFFICIENT DRUGS TO SUBDUE A KILLER WHALE!
BUT, ENOUGH TALK!
REMOVE YOUR EXCESS CLOTHING, AIR-BREATHERS! AND PUT ON THE LIFE SUPPORT UNITS! WE LEAVE WITHIN FIVE MINUTES!
THE FOUR HUMANS OBEY. AS THEY PREPARE TO GO WITH THE GILL-MEN, JILL EXAMINES THE HELMET SHE HAS BEEN GIVEN...
THERE'S NO SELF-CONTAINED OXYGEN SYSTEM IN THESE UNITS, BOYD. THE FILTERS ON THE FRONT MUST DRAW AIR DIRECTLY FROM WATER!
THEY DO MORE THAN THAT, HUMAN! THEY WILL ALSO ALLOW US TO COMMUNICATE WHEN SUBMERGED!
NOW, QUICKLY! TO THE LAUNCH!
A LADDER HAD BEEN RUN UP TO THE SECOND STORY WINDOW. BATO, THE LEADER, CLIMBS DOWN TO THE WAITING CRAFT.
HELMSMAN! SET A COURSE FOR HOME! BUT BE ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR PREDATORS. THERE IS SO MUCH CARRION IN THESE WATERS SHARKS HAVE RAIDED FAR INLAND!


WITH UNERRING PRECISION, THE HELMSMAN STEERS THE SLEEK CRAFT THROUGH THE TRICKY CURRENTS OF WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN JUAN DE FUCA STRAITS...
STAND BY FOR SUBMERGENCE IN ONE MINUTE.
MOMENTS LATER, WITH HARDLY A RIPPLE TO SHOW ITS PASSING, THE LAUNCH SLIPS BENEATH THE SURFACE!
AMAZING! WHAT KEEPS US FROM BEING SWEPT AWAY?
OUR TECHNOLOGY IS IN MANY WAYS MORE ADVANCED THAN YOURS, CAPTAIN! THE LAUNCH IS SURROUNDED BY A BUBBLE OF ENERGY WHICH HOLDS US IN PLACE!
FOR NEARLY TWO HOURS THE CRAFT SPEEDS BENEATH THE PACIFIC! SO SMOOTH AND EFFORTLESS IS THEIR TRAVEL THAT BOYD ELLIS SOON GIVES UP TRYING TO GUAGE THEIR SPEED, UNTIL...
AIR-BREATHERS! BEHOLD THE HIDDEN EMPIRE!
AS THE LAUNCH GLIDES INTO THE GREAT DOME, THE FEELS KUNO GROW TENSE AT HER SIDE. SO AWESOME IS THE PANORAMA SPREAD OUT BEFORE THEM THAT EVEN THE HALF DRUGGED BOTH IS IMPRESSED...

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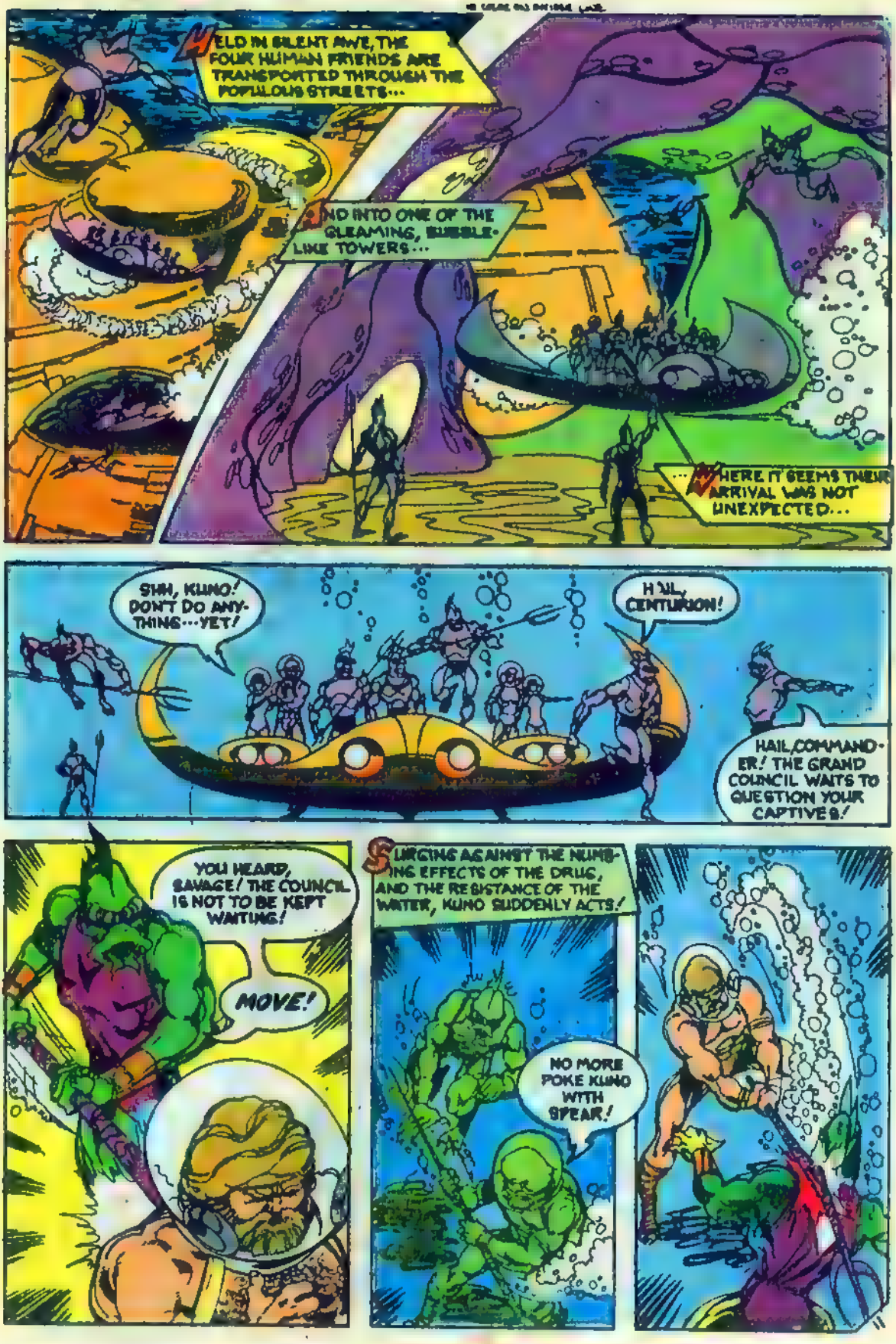
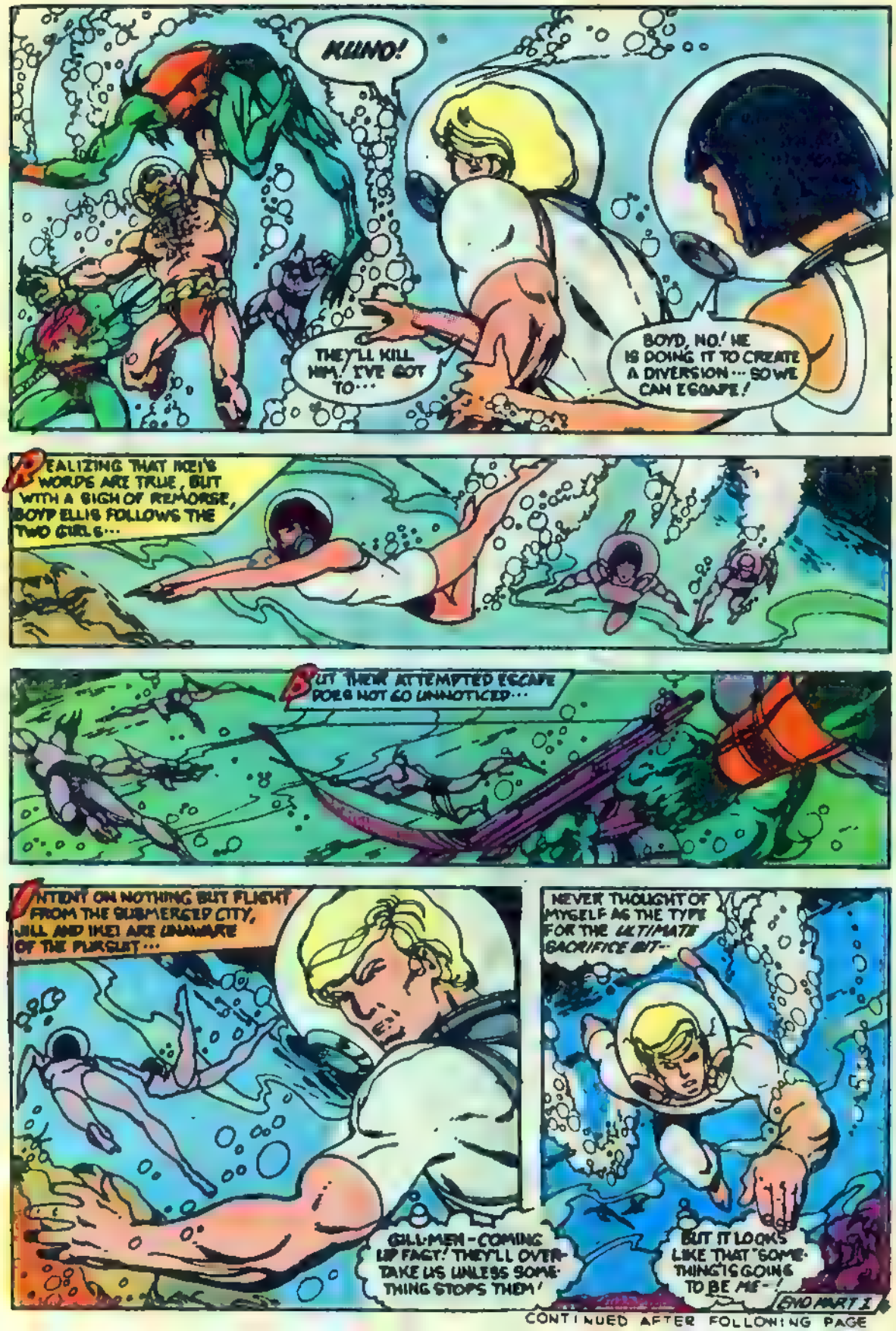

HELD IN SILENT AWE, THE FOUR HUMAN FRIENDS ARE TRANSPORTED THROUGH THE POPULOUS STREETS...
...AND INTO ONE OF THE GLEAMING, BUBBLE-LIKE TOWERS...
...WHERE IT SEEMS THEIR ARRIVAL WAS NOT UNEXPECTED...
SHH, KUNO! DON'T DO ANY-THING...YET!
HAIL, CENTURION!
HAIL, COMMAND-ER! THE GRAND COUNCIL WAITS TO QUESTION YOUR CAPTIVES!
YOU HEARD, SAVAGE! THE COUNCIL IS NOT TO BE KEPT WAITING!
MOVE!
SURGING AGAINST THE NUMB-ING EFFECTS OF THE DRUG, AND THE RESISTANCE OF THE WATER, KUNO SUDDENLY ACTS!
NO MORE POKE KUNO WITH SPEAR!


KUNO!
THEY'LL KILL HIM, I'VE GOT TO···
BOYD, NO! HE IS DOING IT TO CREATE A DIVERSION··· SO WE CAN ESCAPE!
REALIZING THAT IKEI'S WORDS ARE TRUE, BUT WITH A SIGH OF REMORSE, BOYD ELLIS FOLLOWS THE TWO GIRLS···
BUT THEIR ATTEMPTED ESCAPE DOES NOT GO UNNOTICED···
INTENT ON NOTHING BUT FLIGHT FROM THE SUBMERGED CITY, JILL AND IKEI ARE UNAWARE OF THE PURSUIT···
GILLMEN - COMING UP FAST! THEY'LL OVERTAKE US UNLESS SOMETHING STOPS THEM!
NEVER THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS THE TYPE FOR THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE BUT··
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THAT "SOMETHING" IS GOING TO BE ME--!
END PART I

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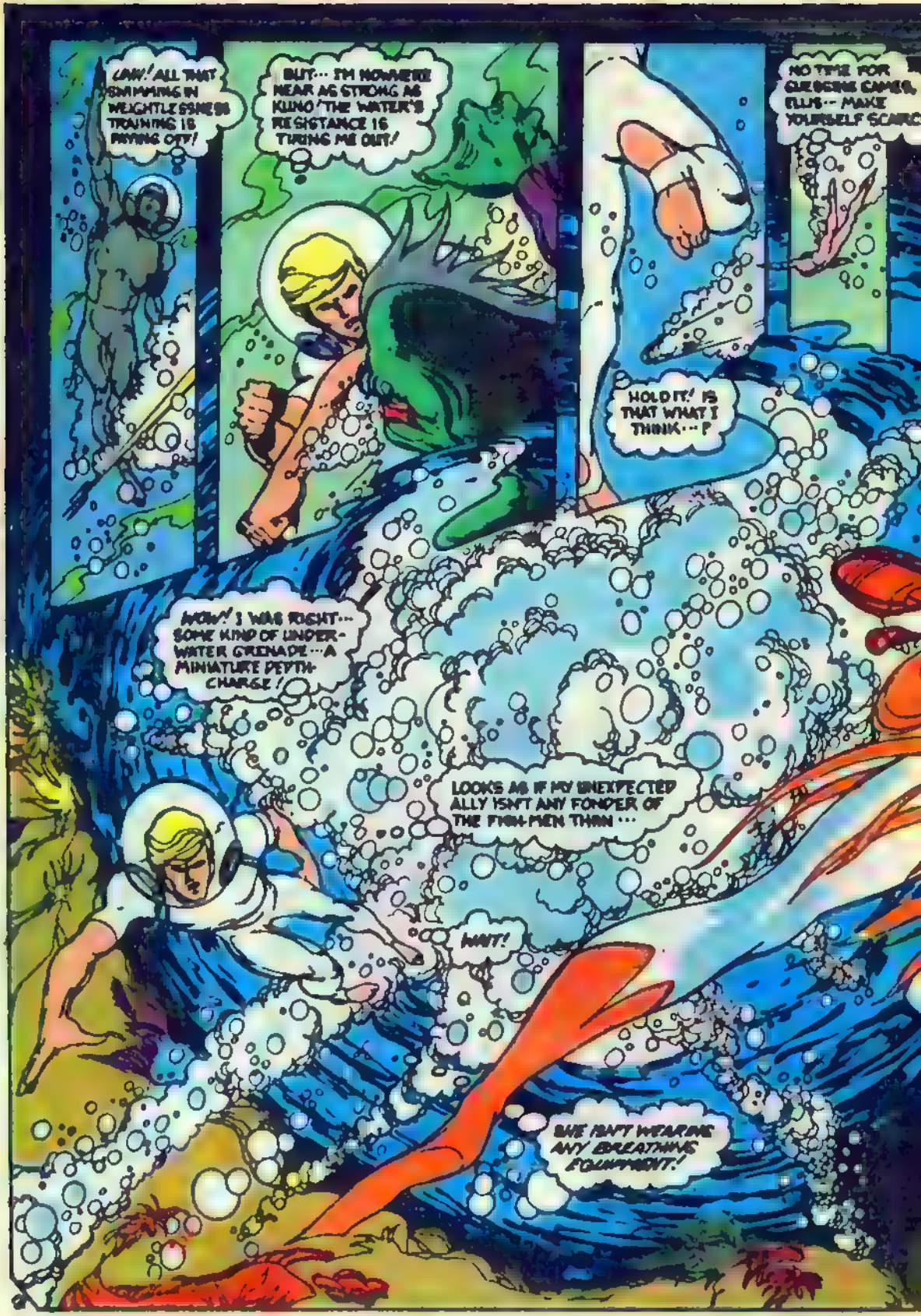

AAH! ALL THAT SWIMMING IN WEIGHTLESSNESS TRAINING IS PAYING OFF!
BUT... I'M NOWHERE NEAR AS STRONG AS KUNO! THE WATER'S RESISTANCE IS TIRING ME OUT!
NO TIME FOR GUESSING GAMES, ELLIS -- MAKE YOURSELF SCARCE
HOLD IT! IS THAT WHAT I THINK...?
WOW! I WAS RIGHT... SOME KIND OF UNDER-WATER GRENADE... A MINIATURE DEPTH-CHARGE!
LOOKS AS IF MY UNEXPECTED ALLY ISN'T ANY FONDER OF THE FISH-MEN THAN...
WAIT!
SHE ISN'T WEARING ANY BREATHING EQUIPMENT!

UNH! ALL THAT SWIMMING IN WEIGHTLESSNESS TRAINING IS PAYING OFF!

BUT... I'M NOWHERE NEAR AS STRONG AS KUNO! THE WATER'S RESISTANCE IS TIRING ME OUT!

NO TIME FOR GUESSING GAMES, ELLIS -- MAKE YOURSELF SCARCE!

HOT

HOLD IT! IS THAT WHAT I THINK...?

WOW! I WAS RIGHT... SOME KIND OF UNDER-WATER GRENADE... A MINIATURE DEPTH-CHARGE!

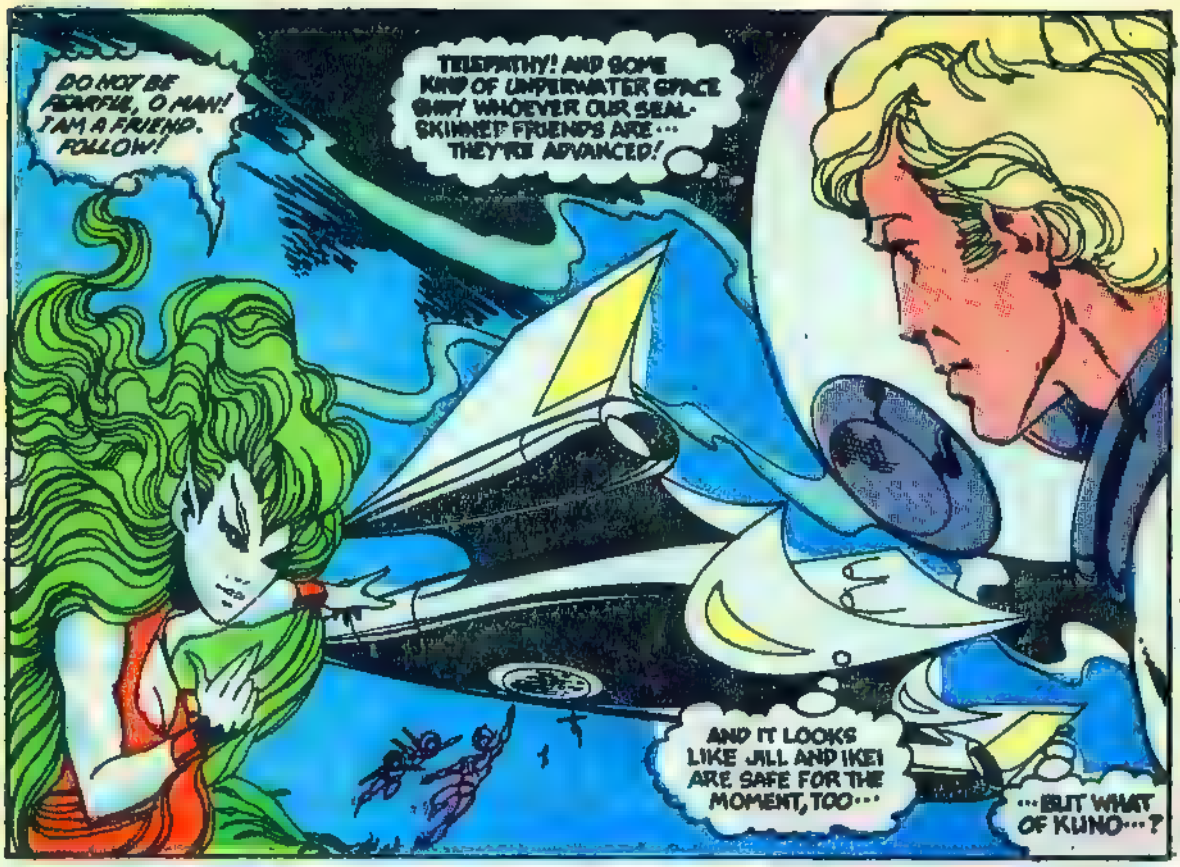
LOOKS AS IF MY UNEXPECTED ALLY ISN'T ANY FONDER OF THE FISH-MEN THAN...

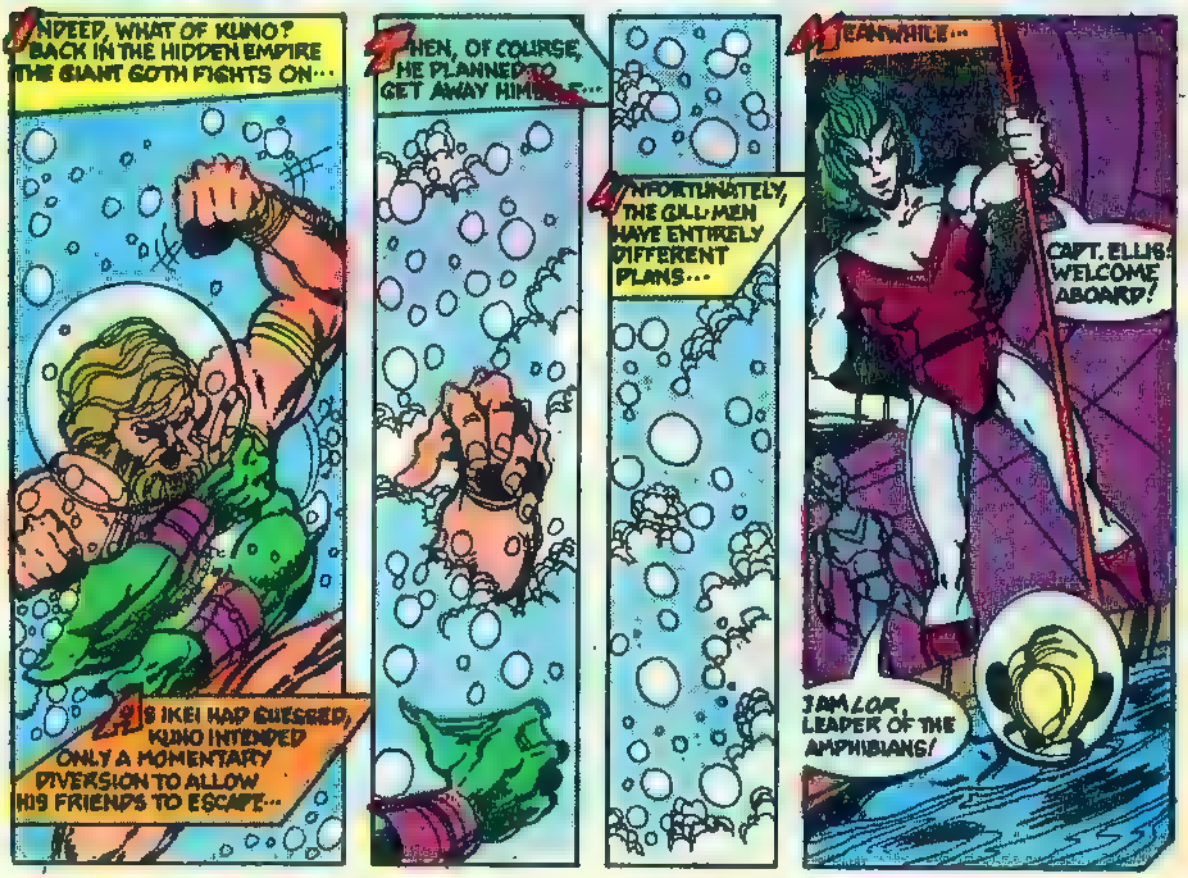
WAIT!

SHE ISN'T WEARING ANY BREATHING EQUIPMENT!

GEEV SEIN. GREEN HAIR. CONSULT COVER COLORATION IF PERPLEXED

GREY SKIN, GREEN HAIR. CONSCIOUS COVER. COLORATION IF POSSIBLE

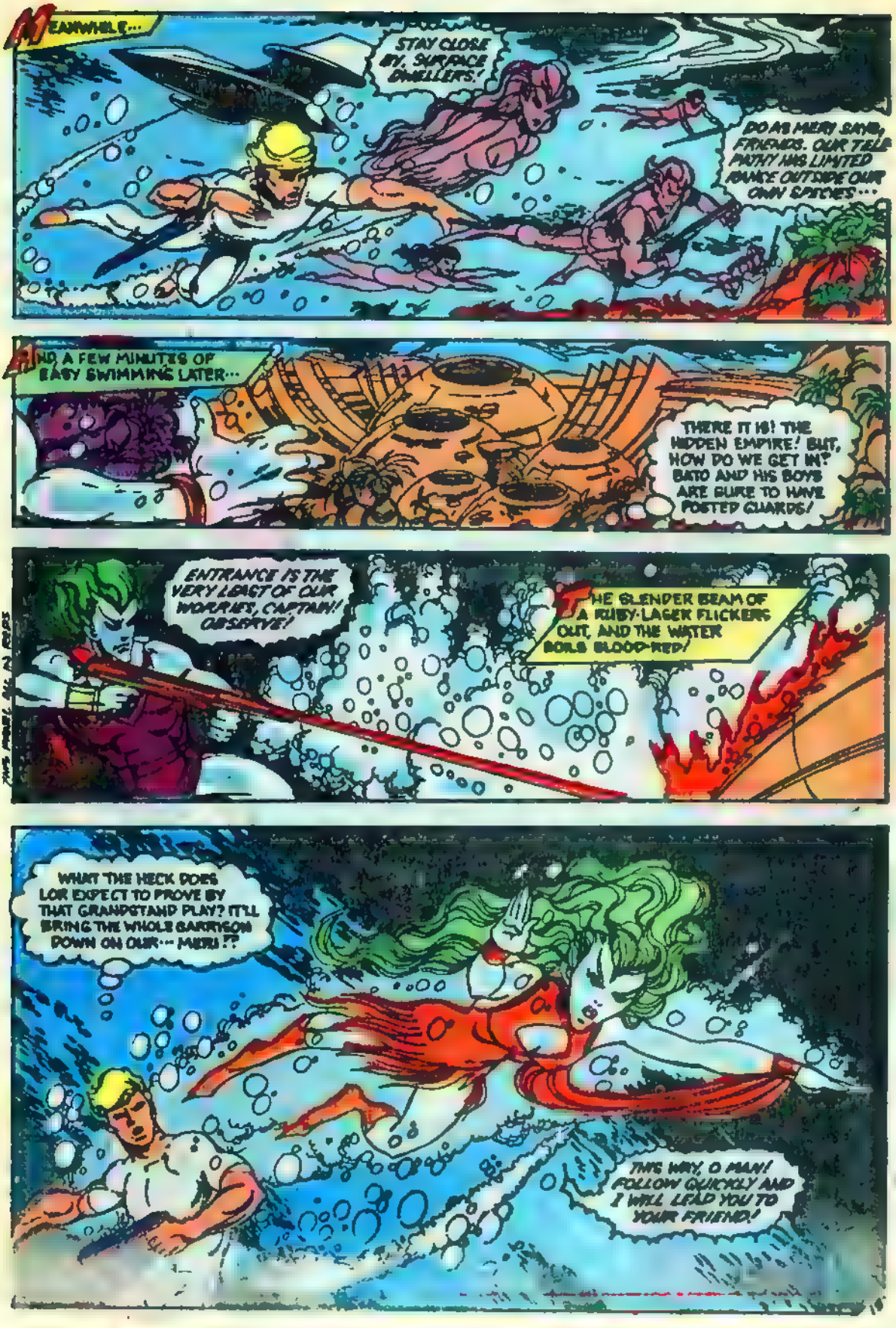

DO NOT BE FEARFUL, O MAN! I AM A FRIEND. FOLLOW!
TELEPATHY! AND SOME KIND OF UNDERWATER SPACE SHIP! WHOEVER OUR SEAL-SKINNED FRIENDS ARE... THEY'RE ADVANCED!
AND IT LOOKS LIKE JILL AND IKEI ARE SAFE FOR THE MOMENT, TOO...
...BUT WHAT OF KUNO...?


INDEED, WHAT OF KUNO? BACK IN THE HIDDEN EMPIRE THE GIANT GOTH FIGHTS ON...
AS IKEI HAD GUESSED, KUNO INTENDED ONLY A MOMENTARY DIVERSION TO ALLOW HIS FRIENDS TO ESCAPE...
THEN, OF COURSE, HE PLANNED TO GET AWAY HIMSELF...
UNFORTUNATELY, THE GILL-MEN HAVE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PLANS...
MEANWHILE...
CAPT. ELLIS: WELCOME ABOARD!
I AM LOR, LEADER OF THE AMPHIBIANS!

THANK YOU, COMMANDER. AND ESPECIALLY, THANKS FOR YOUR AID. BUT, I MUST CONFESS A CERTAIN CONFUSION···
YOU SEEM TO REPRESENT A SECOND BRANCH OF AQUATIC MAN. WE ON THE SURFACE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THERE WAS ONE!
THAT IS NOT SURPRISING, CAPTAIN. LIKE THE GILL-MEN WE SOUGHT TO CONCEAL OUR EXISTENCE···
BUT, THAT IS NOT NECESSARY NOW - AND, I SUPPOSE, IF WE ARE TO BE ALLIED AGAINST A COMMON FOE, IT IS ONLY JUST THAT YOU KNOW SOMETHING OF US···
ONCE, LIKE YOUR PRIMITIVE ANCESTORS, WE WALKED THE LAND. BUT, WHEN AN ADVANCING ICE-CAP TRAPPED A COLONY OF OUR BRUTISH FORE-BEARS, THEY TURNED TO THE SEA FOR ESCAPE···
IT HAPPENED VERY QUICKLY IN TERMS OF THE SLOW MARCH OF EVOLUTION···
BY THE TIME WE WERE NEANDERTHALS, WE WERE TRULY AMPHIBIANS.
THE SEA IS A HARSH WORLD IN MANY WAYS. THUS, WE HAD TWO CHOICES: PROGRESS TECHNOLOGICALLY -- OR DIE! WE PROGRESSED RAPIDLY.
BUT, THE SECURITY OF OUR HIGH CULTURE MEANT MORE OF OUR PEOPLE SURVIVED EACH YEAR. SOON WE FACED OVERCROWDING, FOR WE LIVED ONLY IN THE SHALLOWS···
SO WE USED OUR SCIENCE TO CREATE A SECOND RACE: THE GILL-MEN, WHO COULD LIVE IN THE DEPTHS.
TO ENSURE THEIR SURVIVAL, WE GAVE THEM MANY TRAITS OF THE STRONGEST CREATURES OF OUR WORLD. BUT, SOMEHOW, OVER THE CENTURIES CERTAIN OF THOSE TRAITS BECAME DOMINANT.
NOW, THEY ARE AS VICIOUS AS A ROGUE SHARK - AND THEY HAVE TURNED ON US!
16

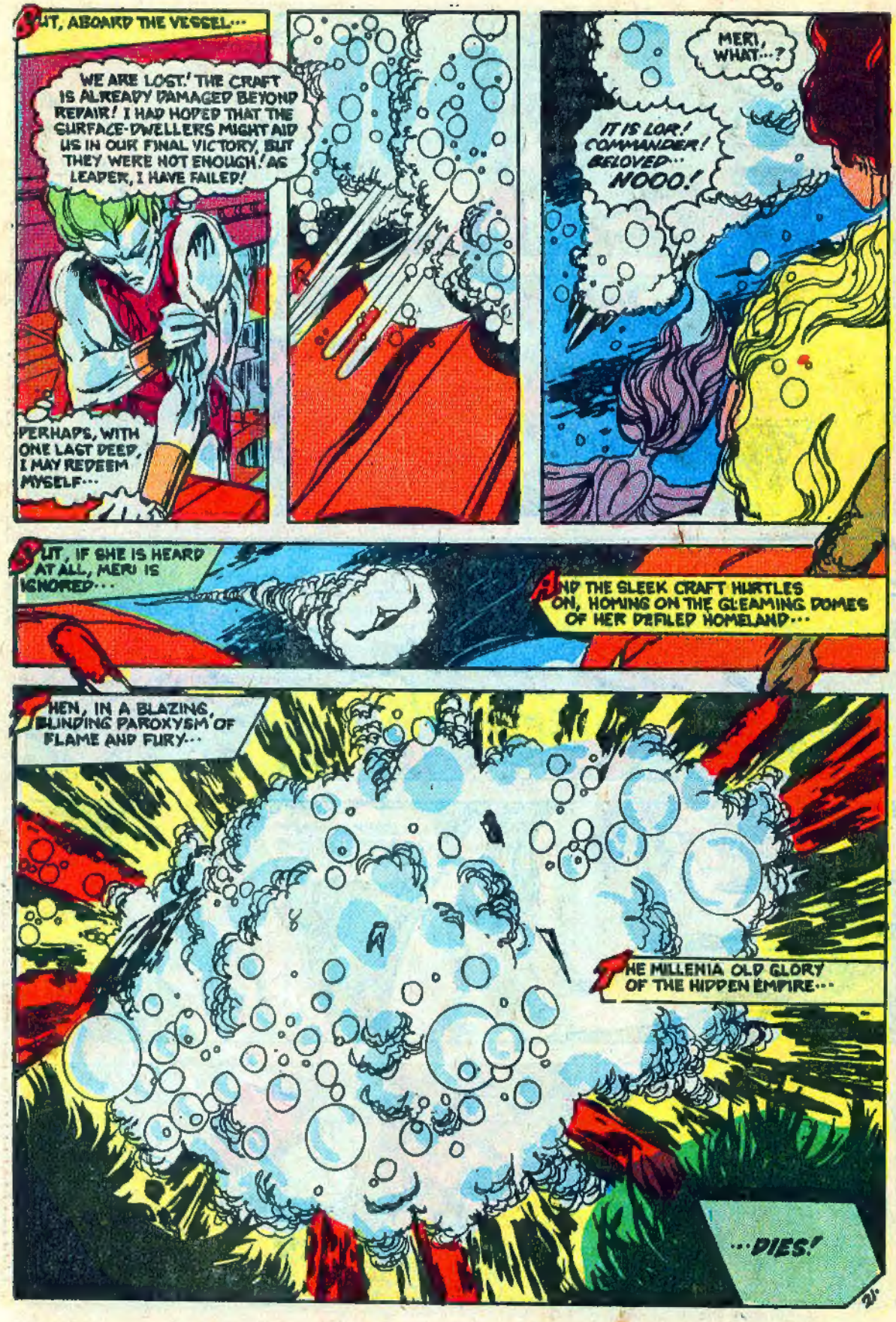
CONTINUED AFTER THE NEXT TWO PAGES

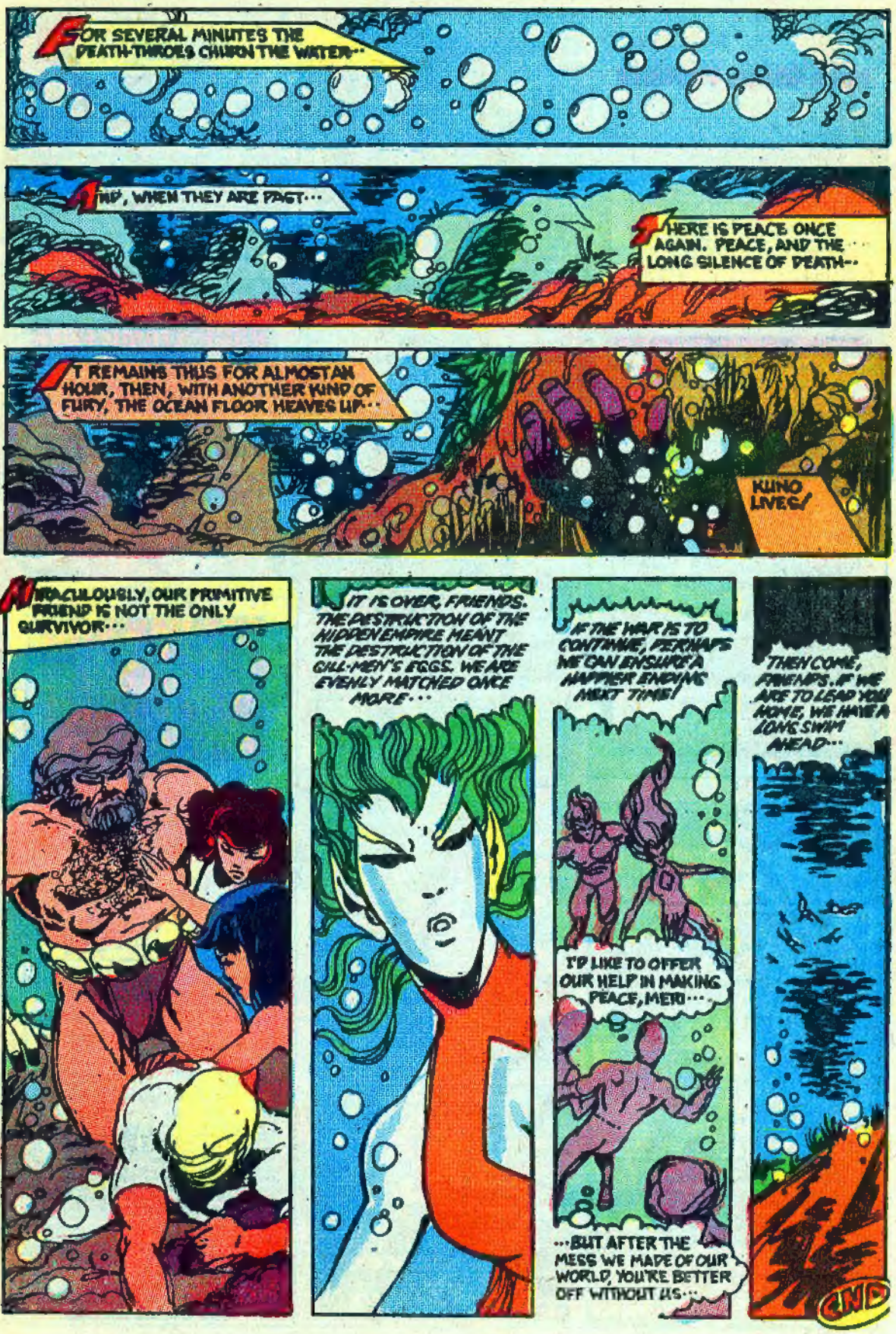
I THINK I CAN GUESS A LOT OF THE REST, LOR.
THE GILL-MEN ARE EGG-LAYERS. USING YOUR SCIENCE, THEY ENSURED MORE AND MORE OF THE HATCH LIVED INTO ADULTHOOD···
···AND SOON CAME TO OUTNUMBER US, YES. IF NOT FOR OUR HIGH SCIENCE, THEY WOULD ANNIHILATE US!
AND SO, THEY BEGAN TO RAID OUR CITIES. TEN THOUSAND TIMES THEY STRUCK, AND TEN THOUSAND TIMES WERE DRIVEN BACK— UNTIL THE LAST. THEN THE HIDDEN EMPIRE FELL, AND WE SURVIVORS WERE FORCED TO FLEE···
THAT WAS MANY TIDES PAST. THE GILL-MEN HAVE BEEN CONTENT TO DO NO MORE - THEY HAVE NOT PROGRESSED!
WE HAVE. YOU MAY ABANDON YOUR LUNG DEVICES. THESE SMALL FILTERS WILL ALLOW YOU TO ACCOMPANY US WHEN WE GO TO RESCUE YOUR FRIEND.
···AND WHAT OF THE FATE OF THAT FRIEND?
KEEP AWAY FROM KUNO, FISH-FACE! OR KUNO WILL WRAP CHAINS AROUND UGLY THROAT!
RAGE ON, PRIMITIVE. YOU CANNOT BREAK FREE!
YOU DO NOT RECOGNIZE ME, DO YOU, STUPID ONE? I AM Y'Z!
AH! YOU REMEMBER THE NAME AT LEAST. YES, IGNORANT ONE! YOUR BLUNDERING NEARLY COST MY LIFE—MY GILLS WILL BURN FOR WEEKS!
BE GRATEFUL YOU ARE SO IMPORTANT TO OUR PLANS, AIR-BREATHER! IF NOT, I WOULD LONG AGO HAVE USED YOUR USELESS CARCASS AS SHARK-BAIT!
BUT YOU WILL SERVE A HIGHER PURPOSE BEFORE YOU DIE, SAVAGE! WE NEED YOU ALIVE TO LURE IN THE ACCURSED 'PHIBIANS!
WITH YOU AS BAIT, WE WILL ENSNARE THEM, AND CAPTURE THEIR PRECIOUS VESSEL!


MEANWHILE...
STAY CLOSE BY, SURFACE DWELLERS!
DO AS MERY SAYS, FRIENDS. OUR TELEPATHY HAS LIMITED RANGE OUTSIDE OUR OWN SPECIES...
AND A FEW MINUTES OF EASY SWIMMING LATER...
THERE IT IS! THE HIDDEN EMPIRE! BUT, HOW DO WE GET IN? BATO AND HIS BOYS ARE SURE TO HAVE POSTED GUARDS!
ENTRANCE IS THE VERY LEAST OF OUR WORRIES, CAPTAIN! OBSERVE!
THE SLENDER BEAM OF A RUBY-LASER FLICKERS OUT, AND THE WATER BOILS BLOOD-RED!
THIS PANEL ALL BLUES
WHAT THE HECK DOES LOR EXPECT TO PROVE BY THAT GRANDSTAND PLAY? IT'LL BRING THE WHOLE GARRISON DOWN ON OUR··· MERI!?
THIS WAY, O MAN! FOLLOW QUICKLY AND I WILL LEAD YOU TO YOUR FRIEND!

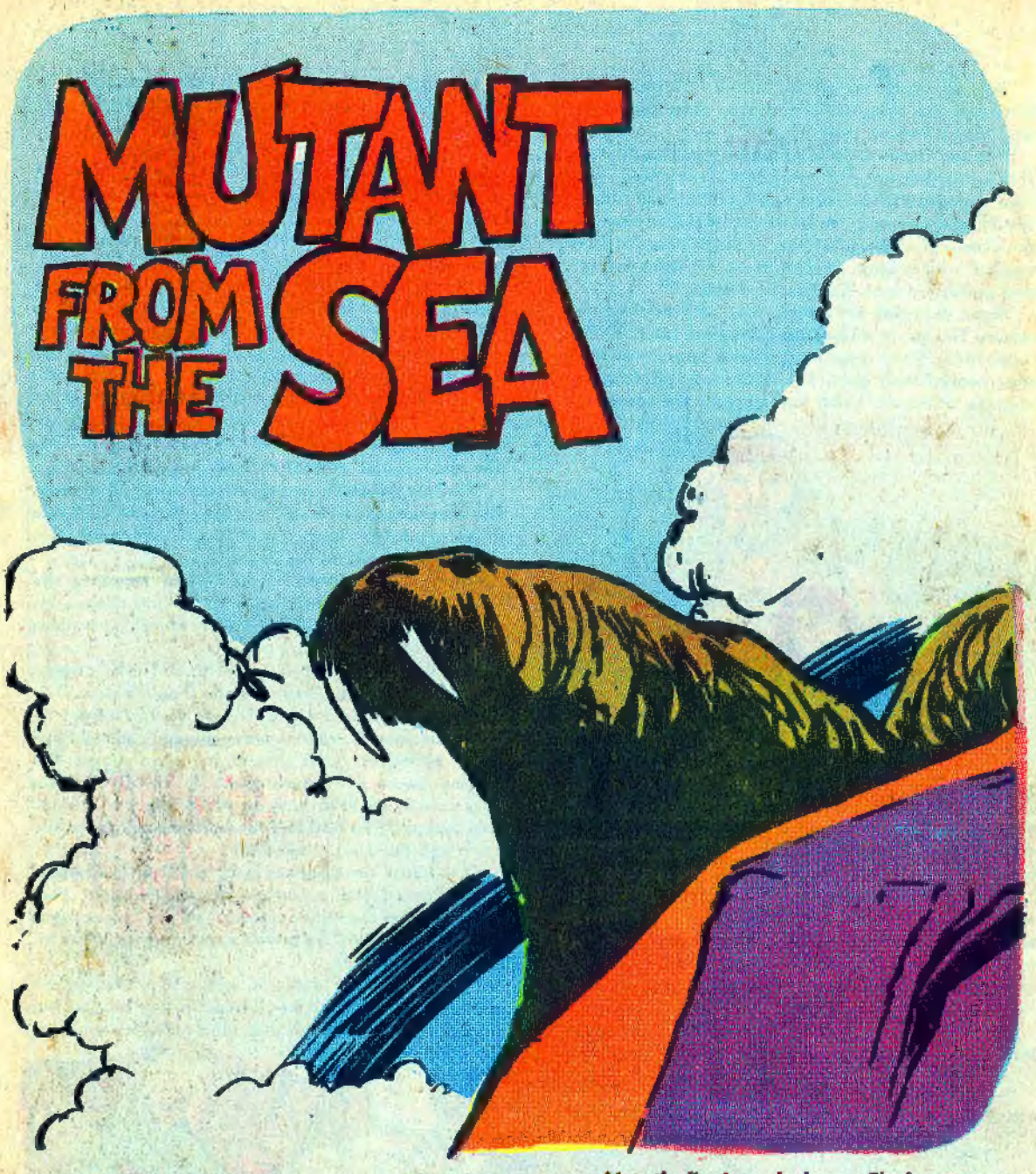
SLOW DOWN, MERI! I CAN'T MATCH YOUR SPEED!
WE MUST MAKE HASTE, O MAN! THE GILL-MEN WILL FLOCK TO THE DISTURBANCE
...BUT SOON ONE WILL REALIZE WHY WE ARE ATTACKING AND SEND A FORCE TO GUARD THE PRISONER!
DOWN THERE!
THAT CHAMBER WAS ONCE OUR HALL OF FREEDOM! IT AMUSES THE GILL-MEN TO USE IT AS A PRISON!
LOOK OUT, MERI!
IT'S OUR OLD FRIEND YIZ, IF I'M ANY JUDGE OF FISH-FACES!
ELLIS! AND A PHIBIAN FEMALE!
SORRY, PAL! CAN'T LET YOU RAISE THE ALARM. GUESS THIS JUST ISN'T YOUR WEEK!
NOW TO ADJUST THIS BLASTER FROM "STUN" TO "KILL" AND...
GOOD! KUNO REALIZES WHAT I'M DOING! HE'S PULLING THE CHAIN TIGHT!
GOOD, BO-YUD!
THIS IS YOUR FRIEND CAPTAIN ELLIS? WHAT A MAGNIFICENT WARRIOR!
HUH? KUNO DOES NOT UNDERSTAND! HE HEARS WORDS, BUT PRETTY FISH-GIRL IS NOT TALK!

CAPTAIN... IF I EXPLAIN, WILL HE COMPREHEND?
IF YOU KEEP IT SIMPLE, MERI. KUNO'S A LOT SMARTER THAN YOU'D THINK!
BUT NOW- WE'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE OL' BLACKY LA GOON COMES TO!
AS THE THREE ALLIES SWIM AWAY FROM THE HIDDEN EMPIRE, MERI GIVES KUNO A SMALL FILTER, AND THE GOTH ABANDONS HIS HELMET. THEN...
GILL-MEN! ATTACKING THE AMPHIBIAN'S SHIP!
CAPTAIN! THAT CRAFT IS OUR ONLY ADVANTAGE OVER THE GILL-MEN!
IF THEY DAMAGE OR DESTROY HER, WE ARE LOST!
KUNO IS NOT SURE WHAT "ADVAN-TAJ" MEANS, BUT IF FISH-GIRL SAY THIS BAD THING...
KUNO KILL!


BUT, ABOARD THE VESSEL...
WE ARE LOST! THE CRAFT IS ALREADY DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR! I HAD HOPED THAT THE SURFACE-DWELLERS MIGHT AID US IN OUR FINAL VICTORY, BUT THEY WERE NOT ENOUGH! AS LEADER, I HAVE FAILED!
PERHAPS, WITH ONE LAST DEED, I MAY REDEEM MYSELF...
MERI, WHAT...?
IT IS LOR! COMMANDER! BELOVED... NOOO!
BUT, IF SHE IS HEARD AT ALL, MERI IS IGNORED...
AND THE SLEEK CRAFT HURTLES ON, HOMING ON THE GLEAMING DOMES OF HER DEFILED HOMELAND...
THEN, IN A BLAZING, BLINDING PAROXYSM OF FLAME AND FURY...
THE MILLENIA OLD GLORY OF THE HIDDEN EMPIRE...
...DIES!


FOR SEVERAL MINUTES THE DEATH-THROES CHURN THE WATER...
AND, WHEN THEY ARE PAST...
THERE IS PEACE ONCE AGAIN. PEACE, AND THE LONG SILENCE OF DEATH...
IT REMAINS THUS FOR ALMOST AN HOUR, THEN, WITH ANOTHER KIND OF FURY, THE OCEAN FLOOR HEAVES UP...
KUNO LIVES!
MIRACULOUSLY, OUR PRIMITIVE FRIEND IS NOT THE ONLY SURVIVOR...
IT IS OVER, FRIENDS. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE HIDDEN EMPIRE MEANT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GILL-MEN'S EGGS. WE ARE EVENLY MATCHED ONCE MORE...
IF THE WAR IS TO CONTINUE, PERHAPS WE CAN ENSURE A HAPPIER ENDING NEXT TIME!
I'D LIKE TO OFFER OUR HELP IN MAKING PEACE, METI...
...BUT AFTER THE MESS WE MADE OF OUR WORLD, YOU'RE BETTER OFF WITHOUT US...
THEN COME, FRIENDS. IF WE ARE TO LEAD YOU HOME, WE HAVE A LONG SWIM AHEAD...
THE END

# MUTANT FROM THE SEA



Boyd, Ikei, Jill and Kuno were once again forced to make a dangerous trek into the isolated, frozen wastelands of Greenland's polar cap. They braved the ominous regions of snow and ice purely out of necessity.

Woolly mammoths resurrected by the nuclear holocaust after long centuries of frozen sleep in the ice now frequented the outlying areas of the vast, icy wasteland.

Finding and slaying a woolly mammoth meant that the empty bellies of the Doomsday survivors would be filled with meat. Food was a top priority necessity. Food was needed for survival. The woolly mammoths were life-giving food!

"Look, Bo-yud!" called Kuno, the primitive Germanic warrior as he pointed at a huge footprint pressed into the firmly-packed snow. The former space pilot halted in his tracks, readjusted the sling of his laser rifle and bent over to examine the mysterious spoor. The print was immense. It was larger than a full-grown man.

"What do you make of it?" he asked his female counterparts.

"It certainly wasn't made by a mammoth. It's much bigger than their tracks, and this beast has claws," surmised Ikei.

"It's much too large to be a saber-toothed tiger, although it resembles a cat's paw print. It's not reptilian, that's for sure," added Jill.

"Jih, beast's prints come from there," said Kuno as he pointed in the direction of the ice-covered, mountain slopes.

"Beyond that mountain range is the ocean. Whatever the thing is, it probably came out of the sea," hypothesized Ikei.

"We don't have anymore time to waste on guesses. This is unimportant at the moment," explained Boyd. "We came here to replenish our depleted food supply. We'd better get to it. The temperature is dropping and the wind is picking up. Let's get to the business at hand and get back to base. At least there, we have warmth and protection from the hostile weather!"

"Boyd is right! Let's press on," Jill advised the others. The party of hunters advanced toward their destination. They were nervous and apprehensive as they neared their goal. The mysterious prints of the strange, unknown beast had dogged the same trail

they were following. At the base of a small, snow-covered slope, they paused momentarily to catch their breath.

It was then that they heard the hideous, horrifying, soul-piercing sounds that chilled their spines and made their blood run cold. It was like a wild animal's growl, but a hundred times louder. It was like a lion's roar, but more terrifying. It was the primeval call of a beast bellowing in triumph.

Cautiously, they scaled the slope in order to see what form of creature could make such a monstrous, frightening sound. All that they found was the half-devoured skeleton of a dead mammoth. Huge hunks had been torn away from the carcass.

"This kill, fresh!" announced Kuno.

"Look at those teeth marks! Whatever did this must have powerful jaws," stated Boyd as he shook his head in astonishment.

Suddenly, the beast roared again. The monster was close — too close for comfort! When the group turned, they were appalled by the sight they beheld. The women shrieked in alarm.

The beast they saw was a sea otter! The thing was a giant mutant the size of a dinosaur! Its face was horribly disfigured. It had gleaming fangs and only one eye. Obviously, it had been off shore when one of the Doomsday warheads had exploded. Radiation had created the monstrous beast that was forced to leave the sea in order to hunt for food.

"Quickly, lie down and cover yourselves with snow. The creatures won't be able to see you, and we'll lure it away from here," said Boyd. Jill and Ikei immediately obeyed the command.

"Here! Beast! Here!" called Kuno taunting the creature as the two men sped off toward the mountains. The kill-crazed, blood - thirsty mutant saw them and pursued its escaping prey.

The men led the mutant to the base of a slope laden with snow and ice. They could no longer outrun it. It was time to make a stand. It was now or never!

"If this doesn't work — we're goners!" stated Boyd as he aimed his laser rifle at the snow slope. The intense beam of concentrated light loosened the mountain of snow causing an avalanche. The mutant was buried under tons and tons of snow and ice while Kuno and Boyd escaped safely.

"The beast is at peace at last," said Boyd as he and Kuno passed the mountain of white snow that concealed the creature's carcass. "Its pain, agony and suffering are over," he added as they moved off to rejoin the girls.

The mutant didn't have to cope with the hostile environment of Earth after Doomsday any longer, but Boyd, Kuno, Ikei and Jill did! Who could say which of them was luckier ...